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2. — *Elements of Art Criticism. Designed as a Text-Book for Schools and Colleges, and as a Hand-Book for Amateurs and Artists.* By G. W. SAMSON, D. D., President of Columbian College, Washington, D. C. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co. 1867. 8vo. pp. 840.

THE attitude of many educated Americans to the subject of Art is quite peculiar and anomalous. They hear about it, read about it, and talk about it, but, owing to their geographical position, see little or nothing of it. Whatever maturity of thought and correctness of taste they may have acquired in matters of science and literature, they have had no means of developing in themselves that nice appreciation of the formative arts which, in the pleasure it affords, is like the opening of a new sense. Every scholar can enjoy Dante and Shakespeare by his own fireside; but he must go to Parma and Rome if he would study Correggio and Michael Angelo. A European who has grown up in the shadows of Gothic cathedrals, and been accustomed from childhood to frequent museums filled with the masterpieces of Grecian sculpture and Italian painting, finds it difficult to understand our position in this respect, and seldom makes due allowance for this almost inevitable defect in our culture. To study a work of art in plaster, cork, engraving, or photograph, is better than not to study it at all; nevertheless, the best copy shows us merely what the work is *about*, not what it *is*. The difference between an original and an imitation is of kind as well as of degree, so that in no case can the latter be a substitute for the former. The spirit which gave life and beauty to the artist's creation is too ethereal to be conveyed by the mechanical process of transcription. Yet these meagre transcripts are really the only data which an untraveller American has on which to found an intelligent art criticism. The consequence is, that owing to this narrow field of observation of works of art, if he feels any *mental* interest in it, he is in constant danger of falling into vague and vicious theorizings on a subject which is eminently experimental; for it is only in examples of the beautiful that the laws of the derivation and development of beauty can be profitably studied. Instead of the clear conceptions and independent judgments which he forms concerning matters of exact science, where he has some fixed principles for his guidance, he finds himself, as soon as he enters the domain of imagination and artistic invention, all afloat on a sea of conjecture, and is likely to submit to the pilotage of the first man who comes to him with a show of superior knowledge.

We have been led into this train of thought by the perusal of the recent treatise of Dr. Samson on Art Criticism, — a work that proves conclusively that a man may make “a tour of observation to Egypt,

Western Asia, and Europe," visit "the galleries of ancient and modern art in the Old World," collect "ancient and modern authorities" for "twenty-five years," and deliver "several courses of lectures to both popular assemblies and college classes," and then crown his labors with an octavo volume of eight hundred and forty pages so confused in its general features, and so incorrect in its details, as to be of little practical use either "as a text-book for schools and colleges," or "as a hand-book for artists and amateurs." The work is divided into seven books. In the first, the author discusses the bodily senses and mental faculties addressed and affected by art; and in the remaining six he attempts an historical survey of the growth of art in the departments of drawing, sculpture, architecture, painting, landscape-gardening, and the decorative arts. In the opening chapter we are treated to a dissertation on the original constitution of man and the Garden of Eden, of which Dr. Samson discourses with as much assurance as a tourist might speak of the Bois de Boulogne or the Giardino di Boboli. We are told that man was placed in this garden "to dress and to keep it." Our author italicizes the word "dress," and thence infers that Adam was an artist "perfect in all his powers," and that consequently landscape-gardening, in which this perfect artist was engaged, must be "the highest form of art"; and thus we are brought to the conclusion, that "the whole range of man's faculties for the creation of art was at once and together called into requisition." In the same connection we are favored with Dr. Samson's theory of the fall of man. God, he says, made every tree *first* "pleasant to the eyes," *then* "good for food"; but when the woman looked at the tree she saw that it was *first* "good for food," and *then* "pleasant to the eyes." Thus "the order of man's original impulses was inverted." This is a fair specimen of what the "President of Columbian College," mingling it with liberal extracts from Alison, Burke, and Kames, offers to the public as "art criticism."

We are safe in asserting that at least one fourth of the volume is wasted in foolish and irrelevant theorizings of this kind. There is, for instance, a disquisition on "the superior race," in which the author proves — doubtless to the satisfaction of his late confederates — that "art has been marked with that progress which claimed for it a place in the analysis [annals?] of history" wherever Japhet has "dreamed and toiled" with "Ham as his servant." It is a mysterious dispensation of Providence that has always allowed Northern Barbarians to break up these so perfect systems of civilization. What a beautiful division of labor, — Japhet dreaming, Ham toiling! "This higher race," in comparison with which "Ham's family is third in rank," Dr. Samson calls "the Arian stock," by which term it might be supposed he intended to

designate the Unitarians or some other adherents of the great Alexandrian heresiarch; but which he really uses in place of the proper term *Aryan*.

On page 41 we have a "classification of the fine arts in accordance with their modes of appeal." Those which address human emotions through the ear are music, eloquence, and poetry. Music is defined as a succession of "pleasant sounds disconnected from sentiment"; although we are elsewhere told that it is "the vehicle of important sentiment." Eloquence "addresses the reason by sentiment alone," without respect to the agreeableness of the sounds; whilst poetry appeals to the emotional nature, and superadds to sentiment the grace of diction and the melody of rhythm, or "rythm," as Dr. Samson with praiseworthy economy of the alphabet, spells it. Hitherto we have always supposed that "grace of diction" and harmony in the structure of sentences were by no means incompatible with true eloquence; but we are open to conviction, and ready henceforth to regard it merely as "sounds that may be indifferent or agreeable addressing the reason by sentiment alone," if the author of this definition will be kind enough to tell us what it means. The histrionic art is then characterized as "eloquence combined with that charm of 'action' of which Demosthenes spoke." Every well-taught Freshman knows that the action (*ὑπόκρισις*) of which Demosthenes spoke was regarded by him as the essential element of eloquence, and the first requisite in an orator. Eloquence, too, is both logically and chronologically a later and maturer growth of the human mind than poetry, and in a philosophical arrangement should have been placed after it. "As to order of development," continues our author, "music seems to have become an art, and as such to have reached comparative perfection, much earlier than the arts which address the eye." The only proof adduced in support of this proposition is the fact that in the Jewish Scriptures Jubal, "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ," is mentioned before Tubal-cain, the "instructor of every artificer in brass and iron." On page 294 this subject is again alluded to, and by italicizing the word "*instructor*" it is shown that Tubal-cain was "not only an artist," but also the head of "a school for sculpture." We are aware that such puerile expositions and wresting of words from their plain meaning are frequent in the pulpit, and are by some persons thought to be edifying; but we protest against their having any place in a critical work on æsthetics. We agree with Dr. Samson, that "in rank the arts addressed to the ear are superior" to those which appeal to the eye. But is not this superiority in rank incompatible with priority in time? Is the history of art a record of progress or of retrogression? Is "time's no-

blest offspring" the first or "the last"? It is evident that here, as in many other portions of the book, the author's æsthetic views are vitiated by his theological prejudices. The myth

"Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden,"

so disturbs his vision as to hinder all clear insight into the real organic growth of man's artistic power. Everything is consciously or unconsciously referred to this preconceived notion, and fitted to it by a Procrustean process.

The truth is, the development of the various forms of art corresponds to the development of man's spiritual nature, and the clearness of his thoughts concerning himself. As the soul expands, it seeks new and more adequate media of expression for its ideas, as the tree puts forth a fresh shoot or flower for every extension and pulsation of its life. Architecture is the symbolic phase of art, — vast, vague, with the thought only dimly shining through it. Sculpture is the art of pure form, — sharp in its outlines, clear, and beautiful, — a perfect mirror of Hellenic humanity. This sculpturesque element permeates every branch of Grecian art. Homer's Epos is like bass-relief, and the characters of Euripides and Sophocles stand before us like fine marble groups, with "no speculation" in their wide, pupilless eyes. Painting is the Romantic art, — warm, emotional, and mystic, — reflecting the spirit of the Middle Age; whilst music, poetry, and prose correspond to the nobler inspirations and higher needs of the modern world. Viewed from the stand-point of some such central principle, works of art become something more than curious or pretty toys, — they are the shrines in which nations have deposited their richest and intensest ideas. The end of art is to be sought in the revelation of the inward, rather than in the realization of the outward, — in the influence of the soul, more than in any illusion of the senses. This is why the productions of the early Italian and German masters, Giotto and Wilhelm of Cologne, touch us so deeply, notwithstanding their technical imperfections. *Der Schein der Kunst*, as understood by Hegel, is not a mere trick of painting flowers to deceive humming-birds. Dr. Samson's conception of what constitute a fine art is still lower, and comprises everything that pleases the fancy or tickles the palate. Thus he refers cookery and perfumery "to the circle of the fine arts, since the aim of the professional caterer is not so much to promote utility as to minister to pleasure alone."

The chapter on music is singularly unsatisfactory, even when compared with other portions of this very defective book. It begins with

a *non sequitur*, — a kind of reasoning to which the author shows great partiality, and of which his volume might furnish future writers on logic abundant examples. From the fact that “the terms we use in musical science are borrowed from the mother tongue of the arts,” i. e. the Greek language, it is argued that the principle and practice of “music, as now understood, were recognized by early Grecian philosophers and artists.” From the same premise it might also be inferred that chemistry, as now understood, was well known to the ancient Athenians and Spartans, since the nomenclature of this science is likewise of Greek derivation. It is not true that “the perfection of harmony was attained by the Greeks,” as Dr. Samson affirms. Rhythm and melody were characteristic of ancient music; whereas harmony is the principle of modern music, and was first introduced by the Flemish monk Hucbald, who died in A. D. 930. By *ἀρμονία* the Greeks meant only being in tune. The term was never applied by them to the *simultaneous* combination of agreeable sounds, and in this respect was not distinguished from what we understand by melody, or the *succession* of agreeable sounds; although their word *μελῳδία* had a broader signification, and was used as synonymous with musical construction in general. But although Dr. Samson devotes more than thirty pages to the discussion of Grecian, Hebrew, Assyrian, and Egyptian music, of which we have no trustworthy knowledge, he passes over in utter silence the most brilliant musical epoch in history, beginning with the Belgian contrapuntists Dufay, Ockenheim, and Josquin Desprez, and reaching its highest development in the *free style* of Haydn and Mozart. There is not a word in the book from which it could be inferred that such persons as Palestrina, Bach, Gluck, Händel, and Beethoven ever lived. The section which treats of “major and minor chords” is hardly above the average instruction given on this point in country singing-schools. We are informed of the distinction between major and minor intervals, of the difference between flats and sharps. But in “art criticism,” the reader expects something more. He wishes to know what are the æsthetic effects of different keys, and how they have been employed by the great composers to express passion and delineate character. It is not on the palette, but on the canvas, that we must study the painter’s coloring; and no theory of tones will contribute much to musical culture, unless we learn to appreciate them as embodied in symphonies, operas, and oratorios. Dr. Samson concludes, also, that because “in nature the ear is addressed by sounds that horrify,” it is therefore legitimate to “imitate these and kindred sounds” in music. “The Dying Gladiator and the Laocoön in sculpture,” he adds, “awaken the same impression of horror as that aroused

by the actual scene when witnessed by the eye." Does the author mean that he would look upon "the dying gladiator" of a Roman amphitheatre with the same feelings with which he contemplates the marble figure of the Capitoline Museum? Or would the man in the menagerie crushed by the boa-constrictor excite in the spectator no stronger emotions than the fate of the Trojan priest and his two sons in the marble coils of Minerva's avenging serpents? The absurdity of such views of art was exposed by Lessing more than a century ago. In the eyes of Dr. Samson, however, an artistic representation is only a convenient substitute for sheer reality.

The childishness which seeks to trace every form of art to some type in nature, or to some utilitarian end, often leads him to extremely ludicrous results. This is especially evident in the chapter on Architecture, concerning which we believe that more foolish things have been said and written than on any other one subject whatsoever, but none more foolish than those contained in this book. Thus, he finds the origin of the Gothic style in Swiss cottages built with "sharp peaked roofs and projecting eaves to *cut and fling aside the falling avalanche*." It would be scarcely less absurd to maintain that spires were intended to catch the sky when it falls. Yet the author evidently prides himself on this happy solution of the problem, inasmuch as he returns to it on page 444, where, after speaking of "the gentle slope of the Grecian gable, fitted for the flow of a mild spring shower," "the straight basilica, or curved dome, necessary for winter rains at Rome," and the meteorological functions of other kinds of architecture, he adds, that "neither of these could cut and throw off the deluge of snow falling at the mountain's foot, or the avalanche slipping from its sides." To the "knife-blade roof" of the Alpine *chalet* was reserved the important office of splitting glaciers and flinging aside avalanches! We regret that no instances are given of successful performances of this kind.

The limits assigned to a critical notice do not allow us to follow the author through the books which treat of the formative arts. Enough, however, has been said to enable the reader to judge of the general character of the work,—*ex pede Herculem*. But it contains many minor errors which we must briefly indicate. Dr. Samson's orthography of proper names is peculiar, and not only offends the eye, but sometimes perplexes the understanding. Ludovico Caracci (with one *r*), Bartolomeo (with one *m*), Melizzo, Barbieri, Savanarola, Polidora Caldara, and La Sueur are intelligible, but by no means elegant. Antonello da Messina, who introduced oil-painting into Italy, is so well disguised under the name of Antonelli, that "the ordinary pupil and the general reader," for whom Dr. Samson professes to write, would have great

difficulty in finding him out. Nor is it true that this painter was murdered by a rival "who vainly aspired to the credit of the invention." This is evidently a confusion of the story of Antonello with that which Vasari tells of the assassination of Domenico Veneziano by his fellow-artist Andrea del Castagno. Pietro Vanuccio is not pleasant to the eye, and still less so to the ear; and the same may be said of Piero della Francesca. When names like these are spelled with uniform incorrectness, it is impossible for the most charitable critic to attribute the errors wholly to the carelessness of the proof-reader. The same confusion prevails in the orthography of Greek words, which are written in Roman letters italicized: thus $\eta\theta\eta$ becomes *ēthe*, $\mu\eta\mu\eta$ is *mneme*, and $\pi\acute{\upsilon}\lambda\eta$ is *pulā*; $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\omicron\nu\ \delta\acute{\rho}\omicron\varsigma$ is represented by *agion oros*,—the aspirate being utterly ignored. On page 811, *toutōn nika* ($\tau\acute{o}\upsilon\tau\omega\nu\ \nu\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha$) is given as the Greek equivalent of *in hoc signo vinces*; it should be $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\acute{o}\upsilon\tau\omicron\ \nu\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha$. We assure the author that "this method of orthography has" not "the sanction of the most finished ancient and modern writers." In the chapter on Landscape-Gardening we are told that the Romans "followed up the *Arno* for miles from their city in order to select such retreats as Tivoli." This is possibly a typographical error for *Anio*; but it is certainly not the fault of the types that the Sublime Porte is (or, as the author would say, "*are*") called our antipodes; that Stefani's famous crucifix at Naples is located in S. Maria del Carmine, instead of S. Domenico; that the Church of SS. Quattro Coronati becomes "St. Quatri Coronati"; that the Four Evangelists of Domenichino in S. Andrea delle Valle are reduced to "Two Evangelists"; and that the Moses of Michael Angelo is twice spoken of as in "St. Peter's" (p. 629), whereas every tourist knows that it is in S. Pietro in Vincoli. On page 352 the author even waxes eloquent as he describes the visitor entering "that immense church," and standing "spell-bound before the majestic and impassioned statue." Michael Angelo, in characterizing Gentile da Fabriano, said that his "pictures were like his name," i. e. noble, graceful, and refined; all which is expressed in the Italian word *gentile*. On page 617 Dr. Samson alludes to this saying, and adds, "thus playing upon his name, Gentile, *the man of all nations*." In the sections devoted to American artists the author is equally at fault. Greenough's name was not *Horace*, nor was "Washington Allston son of Governor Allston": the former was born in 1779, and the latter (whose name should be spelled with only one *l*) in 1778. In the list of our sculptors no mention is made of Story, whilst nearly a page is given to Horatio Stone, who, although he has never been in Italy, "removed to Washington-City," as we are informed, about eight or ten years ago.

The purity of taste which Dr. Samson brings to the task of art criticism is evident from a passage in which he praises the saloons of American steamboats as "rivalling far any palace apartment the world has ever seen." By this high standard of æsthetics (a word introduced not by Kant, as Dr. Samson states, but by Baumgarten) the author measures the masterpieces of art. But we have neither space nor patience to follow him further. In the chapter on the schools of Italian painters there are some just judgments compiled from Kugler and Fuseli; although we have noted several instances in which a borrowed critique is evidently applied to the wrong picture. The volume has no index, and thus the reader is left without a clew to the labyrinth. The punctuation is arbitrary and confused; but the book is neatly bound, and will prove highly ornamental to the publishers' book-shelves, which, for the sake of art culture in America, we hope it will long continue to adorn.

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3. — *Remarks on Classical and Utilitarian Studies, read before the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, December 20, 1866.* By JACOB BIGELOW, M. D., late President of the Academy. Boston: Little, Brown, & Co. 1867. 8vo. pp. 57.

THESE "Remarks," the author informs us, "were intended as a more complete expression of some of the leading ideas advanced in an Address on the 'Limits of Education,' given last year before the Massachusetts Institute of Technology." Like its predecessor, the present pamphlet is principally occupied with urging the immeasurable superiority at all points of the advanced and enlightened age in which we live, with the view to show that time spent upon the study of the languages and literatures of antiquity is for any useful purpose to a great extent time wasted. What men knew in the Periclean and Augustan ages was not a tenth part of what they know now, and what they knew, "from the general and unfortunate misdirection of the public taste which prevailed in ancient times," was not put to any profitable use. "Among the ancients the labors of gifted and cultivated men, when not expended on subjects of local and temporary interest, were extensively given to fictions, words, and profitless abstractions," and consequently "have hardly entailed on us, their remote descendants, a debt of gratitude for any solid and lasting good which we do not now obtain as well or better from more accessible sources." Even in art, where it has been supposed they excelled, they were really nothing wonderful. Their poetry was involuted and parenthetical, and Greek especially indulges in a great many unnecessary parts of speech, and the matter